



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Soil  
Conservation  
Service

St. Paul,  
Minnesota



# Natural Resource Careers with the Soil Conservation Service in Minnesota





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## **Soil Conservation Service**

### **What SCS is All About**

The Soil Conservation Service – SCS for short – is an agency in the United States Department of Agriculture.

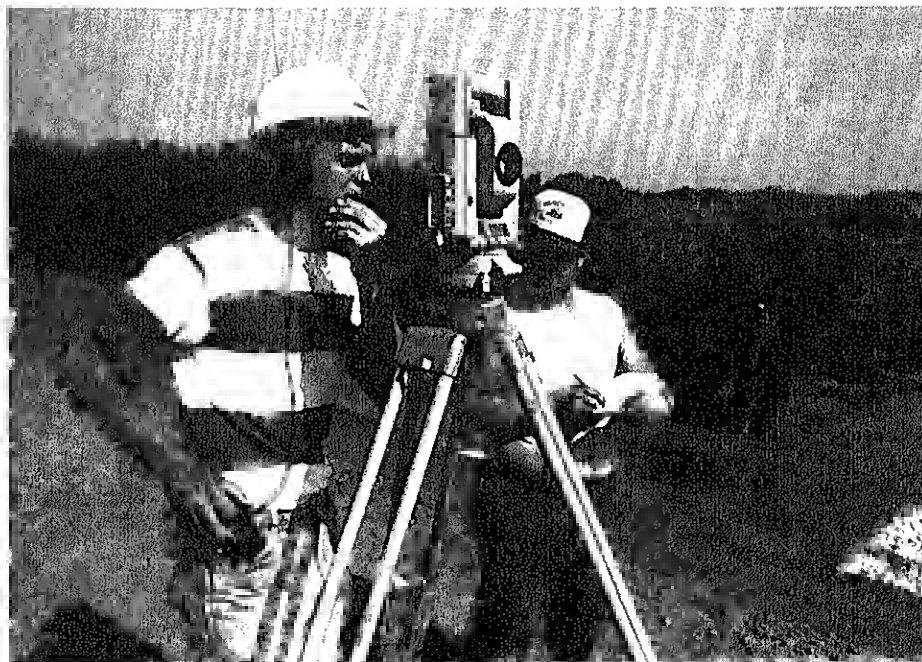
It was from the soil-laden dust clouds of the 1930's in the Midwest and Eastern United States that led Congress to establish the Soil Conservation Service within the United States Department of Agriculture on April 27, 1935.

Soil Conservation Service personnel work with soil and water conservation districts and other local units of government to help land users – individuals, groups and units of government – conserve the soil from water and wind erosion, and protect other natural resources. SCS technical expertise is provided to land users on a voluntary basis.

## Career Opportunities in SCS

This brochure describes many of the different kinds of conservation careers – technical and administrative – that you can enter in the Soil Conservation Service. Each career is unique, however, they all require a personal and professional commitment of working with a team of professional conservationists to conserve natural resources.

Along with the necessary technical and administrative skills, you can enhance your SCS career with strong communication skills and your ability to work well with others.





## **SCS Staff/Work Locations**

### **SCS Staff**

To carry out its job, SCS has a network of conservation specialists who work together to help people understand and protect their land and other natural resources. SCS employs a technical and administrative support staff in Minnesota.

Technical positions include soil conservationists, soil scientists, technicians, engineers, agronomists, biologists, and resource planners.

### **SCS Work Locations**

SCS personnel in Minnesota are employed throughout the state with an administrative office located in St. Paul. Most of the technical staff are in field offices located in every county in the state.





## Starting a Career in SCS

### **Students – How to Get Started in a SCS Career**

Many SCS employees begin their career while in college under the SCS student trainee or cooperative education trainee program. You may qualify for these programs by alternating periods of work and education.

The Federal government's Student Trainee Program offers outstanding opportunities to undergraduate students enrolled in a natural resource curriculum to work with a professional staff in specialized fields such as engineering and agriculture. Student trainees

attend college during the scholastic year and are employed during summer vacation periods. Entry level positions for students are GS-3/4.

The Cooperative Education Program offers job opportunities to students who are in college level technical, trade, vocational and business schools, and for students in associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degree level programs in colleges and universities. Students alternate periods of

study with periods of related work. Your school can tell you if such a program is available or can be arranged.

Information on the Student Trainee Program and Cooperative Education Program is also available from the SCS State Office in St. Paul.

## **SCS Career Positions**

### **For a Professional Career**

These jobs are among those which require a degree from an accredited college or university, or in some cases, equivalent in experience and education.

Entry level is GS-5/7.

Agricultural Economist

\* Agricultural Engineer

Agronomist

Biologist

\* Civil Engineer

Forester

Geologist

\* Soil Conservationist

\* Soil Scientist

\* Greatest entry-level employment potential.

### **Not Interested in College?**

The SCS has many jobs you can still qualify for. Entry levels are GS-3/4 for:

Accounting Technician

Cartographic Technician

\* Clerk-Typist

Personnel Clerk

Procurement Clerk

\* Soil Conservation Technician

\* Civil Engineering Technician

### **Other SCS Careers**

SCS employs other specialists in limited numbers at the field, area, state and/or national levels.

This includes agricultural economists, biologists, foresters, geologists, public affairs specialists, recreation specialists, computer specialists and others.

SCS administrative offices employ accountants, secretaries, contract specialists, personnel and financial managers.



### **SCS Jobs**

The Soil Conservation Service employs people in many technical and administrative support jobs. However, the best opportunities for employment in SCS in Minnesota are:

**Soil Conservationists:** These employees spend most of their time in the field working with farmers, ranchers and other land users. These conservationists, along with the land user, inventory soil and water related problems and suggest and record ways to conserve the natural resources through

the development of a conservation plan. The conservation plan is the land user's record of decisions for conserving his resources. It also contains advice about the application of selected conservation practices.

Soil Conservationists also help students and their instructors classify soils and identify plants. They also hold tours and demonstrations and work with the media to inform people about soil and water conservation problems and solutions.

### **Soil Conservationist Qualifications**

Your course of study for a soil conservationist must include 30 semester hours in natural resources or an agricultural field including at least 12 semester course hours, in a combination of soils and crops or plant science. Of the 12 semester hours, a minimum of 3 semester hours must be in soils and 3 semester hours in crops or plant science.

## **Soil Conservation Technicians**

Soil Conservation Technicians work with soil conservationists in the field office at the county level. It is this employee who helps the land user in applying the resource management system of conservation practices outlined in the land user's conservation plan. These employees survey, design and stake the different conservation practices. They work closely with contractors to make sure conservation practices are built according to

SCS technical design and specifications.

Technicians also make followup visits to make sure the installed practices are working according to the conservation plan.

**Qualifications:** An employee in this position does not require a college degree, but some specialized knowledge of farm or ranch operations and work experience that makes you familiar with conservation practices is desirable.



## **Soil Scientists**

Soil scientists are concerned with the best possible uses of each kind of soil. Soil scientists know that different soils vary enormously in their behavior and suitability for different uses. It is difficult to run a farm, build a housing development, or pave a highway without knowing something about soils. So farmers, commercial developers, and state and local planners all turn to SCS soil scientists for information on soils.

Soil scientists walk over the land, identify, classify and write descriptions and detailed information about each soil. Some

office work is required, however, they spend most of their time in the field. Their finished and published work is the soil survey – a document of maps and detailed information that helps farmers, land use planners and many others decide how to use their land resource wisely.

Qualifications: You can qualify for a soil scientist position if you have a college degree in soil science or a closely related field of biological, physical or earth science. You must have at least 15 semester hours in soils.





## **Engineers**

Engineers are skilled in erosion control, water management, structural design, hydrology, hydraulics, soil mechanics, construction and related subjects.

Engineering work can be very specialized and technical. On large jobs a different engineer takes charge of each phase of the task. On small jobs one engineer does all the work from on-site planning to designing and overseeing con-

struction. SCS engineers may design such things as agricultural water supply systems, earthen and concrete dams, and stream-bank and lakeshore erosion control systems.

Qualifications: A SCS engineer must have a bachelors degree in engineering. Engineers generally specialize in civil, agricultural, or environmental engineering.



## **Civil Engineering Technicians**

Civil engineering technicians spend a lot of time outdoors assisting engineers in planning, investigations, design, or construction work, but also work on their own.

Civil engineering technicians help with survey and investigations. They gather data, make computations, prepare maps and plot cross sections and profiles. Some technicians serve as construction inspectors during the building of large

structures used for such purposes as water storage, flood prevention, and recreation.

Qualifications: You can generally qualify as a civil engineering technician if you have studied engineering in school, have experience on survey crews running levels and transits, or have worked on construction layout and inspection. A sound knowledge of basic mathematics is desirable.



## **Permanent Employment Under Special Authorities**

### **Employment of the Handicapped**

Many handicapped individuals find federal employment through the U.S. Office of Personnel Management application procedures in the same manner as the non-handicapped. However, under certain conditions, SCS may appoint handicapped applicants to permanent positions.

### **Appointment of Peace Corps or VISTA Volunteers**

Former Peace Corps or VISTA volunteers may be appointed to permanent federal positions after satisfactory completion of a volunteer service

as determined by the Director of ACTION. Ordinarily, the ex-volunteer must be appointed within a year from the end of his or her volunteer service. However, this period may be extended up to two years if the volunteer entered the military service or a recognized institution of higher learning on a full-time basis. The ex-volunteer must meet the qualification standards (including any written test requirements), medical and investigative requirements for the position.



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### **Appointment of Vietnam Era Veterans**

Nondisabled veterans with no more than 14 years of education and who served more than 180 days during the period August 5, 1964—May 7, 1975, may be eligible for a Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA). There is no education limit for veterans with compensable disability or those who were discharged for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

This is a 2-year appointment where the veteran hired must agree to undertake a program of education or training while employed under this appointment. Appointments cannot be made above the GS-9 level. The veteran must meet the appropriate requirements for the position. After two years, the veteran's appointment may be converted to a permanent appointment.

**Appointment of 30 Percent Disabled Veterans**

Veterans who have a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more can be given temporary appointments. After 60 days, agencies can convert these temporary appointments to permanent appointments. Under this authority, there is no education limit and appointments may be made at any grade level. All minimum qualification requirements must be met, including a written test if required.



## SCS Training/Advancement/Benefits

### Training

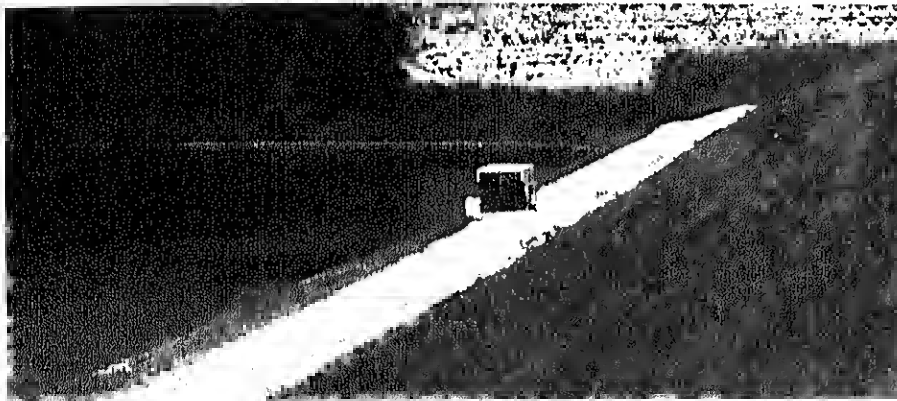
SCS personnel receive specialized training both on-the-job and in group training sessions.

### Advancement

SCS has an excellent competitive career program. Advancement is based on job performance.

### Benefits

Employees are eligible for many benefits, such as sick, annual, and holiday leave, periodic salary increases, group life and health insurance at nominal rates, disability compensation if injured in the line of duty, and the Federal Employees Retirement System.





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## SCS Earth Team Volunteer Program

### **Mission**

The mission of the Earth Team Volunteer Program is to establish an effective volunteer workforce working with SCS to assure wise use and conservation of the nation's soil, water, and related resources.

### **Goals:**

To increase conservation on the land by using volunteers to assist with the technical aspects of applying conservation practices.

To increase support services available for conservation related activities by utilizing volunteers.

To identify potential employees for the Soil Conservation Service.

To increase public awareness of the condition of natural resources.

### **Volunteer Process**

It's easy to become an Earth Team Volunteer. Simply call 1-800-THE-SOIL, or call or visit the SCS office nearest you.



**For More Career  
Information**

To learn how to apply for employment or as an SCS Earth Team Volunteer with the Soil Conservation Service, contact the SCS office nearest you, or write to the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 600 Farm Credit Building, 375 Jackson Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1854.

The Soil Conservation Service is an equal opportunity employer. All programs and services of the SCS are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap. (August 1989)